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"Nothing, except that he's the only one that hasn't caught the scurvy. And why hasn't he caught the scurvy? I'll tell you. No, I won't. And what would have been the use? Don't I know? I'm not a fool. Our caches are filled with every kind of fruit juice and preserved vegetables. We are better situated than any other camp in Alaska to fight scurvy. There is no prepared vegetable, fruit and nut food we haven't, and in plenty."

"She's got you there, Smoke," Shorty exclaimed. "An' it's a condition, not a theory. You say vegetables cure. Here's the vegetables, an' where's the cure?"

"There's no explanation I can see," Smoke acknowledged. "Yet there is no camp in Alaska like this. I've seen scurvy—a sprinkling of cases here and there—but I never saw a whole camp with it, nor did I ever see such terrible cases, which is neither here nor there, Shorty. We've got to do what we can for these people, but first we've got to make camp and take care of the dogs. We'll see you in the morning—Mrs. Sibley."

"Miss Sibley," she bridled. "And now, young man, if you 'come fooling' around this cabin with any doctor stuff I'll fill you full of bird shot."

Next morning, after daylight, Smoke encountered a man carrying a heavy sled load of firewood. He was a little man, clean looking and spry, who walked briskly despite the load. Smoke experienced an immediate dislike.

"What's the matter with you?" he asked.

"Nothing," the little man answered. "I know that," Smoke said. "That's why I asked you. You're Amos Wentworth. Now, why under the sun haven't you the scurvy like all the rest?"

ing with Laura Sibley. Supported by a stick in either hand, she had paused in hobbling by his cabin.

"What have you got it in for Wentworth for?" he asked with a suddenness that caught her off her guard. Her green eyes flashed bitterly and her sore lips writhed on the verge of uncontrolled speech. But only a splutter of gasping, unintelligible sounds issued forth, and then, by a terrible effort, she controlled herself.

"Because he's healthy," she panted; "because he isn't the scurvy; because he is supremely selfish; because he won't lift a hand to help anybody else; because he is letting us rot and die without lifting a finger to fetch us a pall of water or a load of firewood. That's the kind of a brute he is."

Still panting and gasping, she hobbled on her way, and five minutes afterward, coming out of the cabin to feed the dogs, Smoke saw her entering Amos Wentworth's cabin.

"Something rotten here, Shorty, something rotten," he said, shaking his head. "We've got to make them bustle. First thing they'll have to bury their dead. The strongest for the burial squad, then the next strongest on the firewood squad (they've been lying in their blankets to save wood), and so on down the line. And spruce tea. Mustn't forget that. All the sour doughs swear by it. These people have never heard of it."

"We sure got our cut out for us," Shorty grinned. "First thing we know we'll be full of lead."

"And that's our first job," Smoke said. In the next hour each of the twenty odd cabins was raided. All ammunition and every rifle, shotgun and revolver was confiscated.

have any quains." "I'll—I'll take it," she quavered. "Hurry up!"

That night, exhausted as no hard day of trail, Smoke and Shorty crawled into their blankets. "I'm fairly sick with it," Smoke confessed. "The way they suffer is awful. But exercise is the only remedy I can think of, and it must be given a thorough trial. I wish we had a sack of raw potatoes."

"Sparkins, he can't wash no more dishes," Shorty said. "It burts him so he sweats his pain. I seen him sweat it. I had to put him back in the bunk he was that helpless."

"If only we had raw potatoes," Smoke went on. "The vital, essential something is missing from that prepared stuff. The life has been evaporated out of it."

"An' if that young fellow Jones in the Brownlow cabin don't croak before mornin' I miss my guess."

In the morning not only was Jones dead, but one of the stronger men who had worked on the firewood squad was found to have hanged himself. A nightmare procession of days set in. For a week, steeling himself to the task, Smoke enforced the exercise and the spruce tea, and one by one and in twos and threes he was compelled to knock off the workers. As he was learning, exercise was the last thing in the world for scurvy patients. The diminishing burial squad was kept steadily at work, and a surplus half dozen graves were always burned down and waiting. One day Smoke saw the seerss entering Amos Wentworth's cabin and followed after her. At the door he could hear her voice, whimpering and pleading.

"Just for me," she was begging as Smoke entered. "I won't tell a soul." Both glanced guiltily at the intruder, and Smoke was certain that he was on the edge of something, he knew not what, and he cursed himself for not having eavesdropped.

"Out with it!" he commanded harshly. "What is it?" "What is what?" Amos Wentworth asked sullenly. And Smoke could not name what was what. Grimmer and grimmer grew the situation. In that dark hole of a canyon the horrible death list mounted up. Each day, in apprehension, Smoke and Shorty examined each other's mouth for the whitening of the gums and mucous membranes—the invariable first symptom of the disease.

fluid that they fed, several drops at a time, into the frightful orifices that had once been mouths. Shift by shift through the long night Smoke and Shorty relieved each other at administering the potato juice, rubbing it into the poor swollen gums where loose teeth rattled together and compelling the swallowing of every drop of the precious elixir.

By evening of the next day the change for the better in the two patients was miraculous and almost unbelievable. They were no longer the worst cases. In forty-eight hours, with the exhaustion of the potato, they were temporarily out of danger, though far from being cured.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," Smoke said to Wentworth. "I've got holdings in this country, and my paper is good anywhere. I'll give you \$500 a potato out of it."

"Was that all the dust you had?" Wentworth queried. "For heaven's sake be cheerful," Smoke chided.

But, straight, he and I are worth several millions between us." "I haven't any potatoes," Wentworth said snally. "Wish I had. That potato I gave you was the only one. I'd been saving it all the winter for fear I'd get this scurvy. I only sold it so as to be able to buy a passage out of the country when the river opens."

Despite the cessation of potato juice, the two treated cases continued to improve through the third day. The untreated cases went from bad to worse. On the fourth morning three corpses were buried.

Then Smoke and Shorty together invaded Wentworth's cabin, throwing him out in the snow, while they turned the interior upside down. Laura Sibley hobbled in and frantically joined them in the search.

Though the very floor was dug up, they discovered nothing. Another day passed, during which they kept a steady watch on Wentworth's movements. Several times when he started out, water bucket in hand, for the creek they casually approached the cabin, and each time he hurried back without the water.

"I ate it up," was the reply, unimpeachably honest. "That sack's all that's left. Give me a few. You can have the rest."

"Ate 'em up?" Shorty screamed. "A whole sack! An' them geezers dyin' for want of 'em! This for you! An' this! An' this! An' this! You swine! You hog!"

There was no sleep in camp that night. Hour after hour Smoke and Shorty went the rounds, doling the life renewing potato juice, a quarter of a spoonful at a dose, into the poor ruined mouths of the population. And through the following day while one slept the other kept up the work.

There were no more deaths. The most awful cases began to mend with an immediacy that was startling.

"Nary a potato," Shorty told the whining, begging Wentworth. "You ain't even touched with scurvy. You got outside a whole sack, an' you're loaded against scurvy for twenty years. Knowin' you, I've come to understand God. I always wondered why he let Satan live. Now I know. He let him live just as I let you live. But it's a cryin' shame, just the same."

"A word of advice," Smoke told Wentworth. "These men are getting well fast. Shorty and I are leaving in a week, and there will be nobody to protect you when these men go after you. There's the trail. Dawson's eighteen days' travel."

"Gentlemen, I beg of you, listen to me," Wentworth whined. "I'm a stranger in this country. I don't know the trail. Let me travel with you. I'll give you \$1,000 if you'll let me travel with you."

"Sure," Smoke grinned maliciously. "If Shorty agrees." "Who? Me?" Shorty stiffened for a supreme effort. "I ain't nobody. Wood ticks ain't got nothin' on me when it comes to humility. I'm a worm, a maggot, brother to the pollywog an' child of the blowfly. I ain't afraid or ashamed of nothin' that creeps or crawls. But travel with that mistake of creation—go 'way, man! I ain't proud, but you turn my stomach."

at two eggs." She paused impressively. "Suppose, just suppose, somebody corners 'em?"

She waited, and Smoke regarded her with admiring eyes, while in his heart he backed with approval Wild Water's choice of her.

"You're not following," she said. "Go on," he replied. "I give up. What's the answer?"

"Stupid! You know Wild Water. When he sees I'm languishing for eggs, and I know his mind like a book and I know how to languish, what will he do? Why, he'll just start stampeding for the man that's got the corner in eggs. He'll buy the corner, no matter what it costs."

"Picture: I come into Slavovitch's at 11 o'clock. Wild Water will be at the next table. He'll make it his business to be there. Two eggs, shirred. I'll say to the waiter. 'Sorry, Miss Aral,' the waiter will say, 'they ain't no more eggs.' Then up speaks Wild Water in that big bear voice of his, 'Wal-

ter, six eggs, soft boiled.' And the waiter says, 'Yes, sir,' and the eggs are brought. Picture: Wild Water looks sideways at me, and I look like a particularly indignant icicle and summon the waiter. 'Sorry, Miss Aral,' he says, 'but them eggs is Mr. Wild Water's. You see, miss, he owns 'em.' Picture: Wild Water, triumphant, doing his best to look unconscious while he eats his six eggs.

"Another picture: Slavovitch himself bringing two shirred eggs to me and saying: 'Compliments of Mr. Wild Water, miss.' What can I do? What can I possibly do but smile at Wild Water? And then we make up, of course, and he'll consider it cheap if he has been compelled to pay \$10 for each and every egg in the corner."

"Go on, go on!" Smoke urged. "At what station do I climb on to the choo-choo cars or at what water tank do I get thrown off?" "Ninny! You make that corner in eggs. You start in immediately, today. You can buy every egg in Dawson for \$3 and sell out to Wild Water at almost any advance. And then, afterward, we'll let the inside history come out. The laugh will be on Wild Water. His turbulence will be some subdued. You and I share the glory of it. You make a pile of money. And Dawson wakes up with a grand ha, ha!"

"Go on," Smoke requested. "Well, that geezer you was dickerin' with is a big buck Indian. Am I right?"

Smoke nodded and continued to nod to each question. "He's got one cheek half gone, where a bald face grizzly swatted him. Am I right? He's a dog trader—right, eh? His name is Scar Face Jim. That's so, ain't it? D'ye get my drift?"

"You mean we've been bidding"— "Against each other? Sure thing. That squaw's his wife, an' they keep house on the hill back of the hospital. I could 'a' got them eggs for two a throw if you hadn't butted in."

"And so could I," Smoke laughed. "If you'd kept out. But it doesn't amount to anything. We know that we've got the corner. That's the big thing."

Shorty spent the next hour wrestling with a stub of a pencil on the margin of a three-year-old newspaper. "There she stands," he said at last. "Lemme give you the totals. You an' me has right now in our possession exactly 973 eggs. They costs us exactly \$2,700. If we stick up Wild Water for \$10 an egg we stand to win, clean net an' all to the good, just exactly \$5,970."

At 11 that night Smoke was routed from sound sleep by Shorty. "I just seen Slavovitch. He says to me: 'Shorty, I want to speak to you about them eggs. I've kept it quiet. Nobody knows I sold 'em to you. But if you're speculatin' I can put you wise to a good thing.' An' he did, too, Smoke."

"Well, maybe it sounds uncredibly, but that good thing was Wild Water Charley. He's lookin' to buy eggs. He goes around to Slavovitch an' offers him \$5 an egg, an' before he quits he's offerin' \$8. An' Slavovitch ain't got no eggs. Last thing Wild Water says to Slavovitch is that he'll beat the head offer him if he ever finds out Slavovitch has eggs cached away somewhere. Slavovitch had to tell 'em he'd sold the eggs, but that the buyer was secret."

"Slavovitch says to let him say the word to Wild Water, who's got the eggs. 'Shorty,' he says to me, 'Wild Water'll come a-runnin'. You can hold him up for \$8. Eight dollars your grandmother,' I says. 'He'll fall for \$10 before I'm done with him.' Anyway, I told Slavovitch I'd think it over and let him know in the mornin'. Of course we'll let 'em pass the word on to Wild Water. Am I right?"



Supported by a Stick in Either Hand, She Had Paused in Hobbling by His Cabin.

haven't eaten a meal off an unwashed dish. No, sir. It meant work, and I've worked, and I haven't the scurvy."

"Five Hundred Dollars a Potato." PERSUADING, bullying, and, at times, by main strength, men were dragged from their bunks and forced to dress. Smoke selected the mildest cases for the burial squad. Another squad was told off to supply the wood by which the graves were burned down into the frozen muck and gravel. Still another squad had to chop firewood and impartially supply every cabin. Those who were too weak for outdoor work were put to cleaning and scrubbing the cabins and washing clothes. One squad brought in many loads of spruce boughs and every stove was used for the browing of spruce tea.

But, no matter what face Smoke and Shorty put on it, the situation was grim and serious. At least thirty fearful and impossible cases could not be taken from the beds, as the two men, with nausea and horror, learned, while one, a woman, died in Laura Sibley's cabin. Yet strong measures were necessary.

When the working gangs came in at noon they found decently cooked dinners awaiting them, prepared by the weaker members of their cabins under the tutelage and drive of Smoke and Shorty.

"I'll give you \$500 a potato up to \$50,000 worth."

Smoke obeyed her call with alacrity. The man did not exist in Dawson who would not have been flattered by the notice of Lucille Aral, the singing soubrette of the tiny stock company that performed nightly at the Palace Opera House.

"Things are dead," she complained, with pretty petulance. "There hasn't been a stampede for a week. There's no dust in circulation. There's always standing room now at the opera house. And there hasn't been a mail from the outside for two whole weeks. In short, this burg has crawled into its cave and gone to sleep. We've got to do something. It needs livening, and you and I can do it. I've broken with Wild Water, you know."



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"Shorty and I own the corner."

of the way, Shorty. Wild Water's coming up the hill, and he'll be here in five minutes. (Continued next Saturday.)